

Committee on International Relations

Subcommittee on Europe and Emerging Threats

Statement of Chairman Elton Gallegly

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Unfinished Business

April 6, 2005

Today, the Subcommittee on Europe and Emerging Threats is holding a hearing on the current political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the evolving status of its governing institutions.

The most urgent issue in the Balkans today is probably the final status of Kosovo. However, perhaps the more significant consideration in terms of the long-term stability of the Balkans region and its integration with Euro-Atlantic institutions is the current status within Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The year 2005 marks the 10-year anniversary of the Dayton Peace Agreement, the international peace agreement which ended the major conflict of the breakup of the former Yugoslavia from 1992 until 1995, a war which killed almost 250,000 people and resulted in nearly 2.2 million refugees.

The Dayton Agreement stopped the war. However, the overriding criticism of Dayton is that it resulted in the ethnic partition of the country, thus ratifying ethnic cleansing. The two entities established by the Dayton agreement, the Federation (FBiH), which is largely Bosnian Muslim and Croat, and *Republika Srpska* (RS), which is predominantly ethnic Serb, and nationalist politicians in many of the entity governing institutions, continue to inhibit the development of a unified, state-level government.

However, much has been accomplished in the 10 years since the end of the war. NATO has achieved stability and security throughout Bosnia. The Office of the High Representative has achieved significant progress over the past two years in strengthening state-level institutions

and developing their authority and legitimacy over entity-level institutions. Over one million refugees and displaced persons have returned. Quite remarkably, there has been significant progress since the end of 2004 with respect to *Republika Srpska*'s willingness to confront the issue of war crimes.

However, one particular aspect of the refugee return issue could continue to be a problem. Although over one million refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) have returned to Bosnia, less than 450,000 of these returnees were minority returns, or people returning to areas where they are no longer the ethnic majority. Furthermore, of these minority returns, approximately three-quarters of these returns were to the Federation, and only one-quarter were to the RS. This raises the question of whether ethnic partition is still a serious issue for Bosnia and whether the lack of minority returns to the RS may threaten the prospects of establishing an integrated, self-governing, unified Bosnian state.

The purpose of this hearing is to consider how the international community achieved the current status in Bosnia and Herzegovina, how the governing institutions of the Dayton Agreement have evolved over the past ten years, whether ethnic partition is still an issue for Bosnia, whether the evolution of the Dayton governing institutions is sufficient to achieve a viable, unified, self-governing Bosnian state, whether further minority returns to overcome ethnic partition in some areas of Bosnia may also be necessary, and what may be the implications for the Balkans region.

I will now turn to Mr. Wexler for any opening statement he may wish to make.